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Dark tourism and affect: framing places of death and disaster

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual article brings to the attention of tourism scholars new possibilities to theorize dark tourism as an affective socio-spatial encounter. To do so, we frame dark tourism within theories of affect and, in particular, geographies of affect. We show how debates around dark tourism terminology and taxonomies, in most cases underlie considerations on felt, affective aspects of the dark tourism experience. We critically debate the concept of affect, the distinctions between affects and emotions, and the complex issue of representability of affect. Our perspective is underpinned by a necessity to consider the context and limitations that frame the affective experience of the tourist and the resulting encounters. This offers a deeper layer of understanding tourists' experiences in death and disaster places as well as the political and ethical charge imbued in such encounters.

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Introduction

The tourism sector contributes to the global economy with figures in the trillion of dollars, and moves more than 1.2 billion people every year (UNWTO, 2017).¹ Amongst tourists, a growing percentage is setting its eyes on an emerging market: tourism to places of death, disaster and atrocity (Lennon & Foley, 2000). In 2017 more than 2 million people visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial.² Since its opening in 2011, and more than a decade and a half after the 9/11 catastrophe, the new Ground Zero Memorial attracted more than 37 million visitors.³ In Ukraine, due to the tense political situation, general tourism dropped by 48% in 2014, but in Chernobyl, the well-known place of the 1986 nuclear disaster, tourism is on the rise: 50,000 people toured the area in 2017 – a 35% rise on 2016.⁴

This is a conceptual article whereby we frame dark tourism studies via socio-cultural theories of affect. Our aim is to offer understandings of dark tourism as an affective socio-spatial encounter, and investigate the role of affect in how people know, feel, experience conjunctures/disjunctures of dark moments, as well as accounting for the ambiguities and tensions that seem pervasive in these dark spaces and practices. Its relevance originates from the fact that dark tourism sites can elicit strong and complex reactions by their nature (Buda, 2015a; Seaton, 2009). In many cases, indeed, places are consciously constructed to enhance such reactions (Weaver et al., 2018). What is 'unique' about these places is their power to engage with representations of death. They might deeply offend and unsettle visitors, triggering shock, anger, but also wonder and excitement. Most places of death, disaster and atrocities negotiate painful pasts, ethically problematic situations,

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politically oriented discourses on memory and heritage (Godis & Nilsson, 2016), strong emotional and affective reactions – such as pain, fear, empathy, catharsis – from locals as well as visitors.

Dark tourism refers to visitations to places of death, disaster and atrocities (Foley & Lennon, 1996), which increasingly form part of the tourism landscape. It has caught the attention of the wider public (Blackwell, 2013; Hodge & Weinberger, 2011; Istvan, 2003) and of academics mainly in tourism studies (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005; Buda, 2015a; Cohen, 2011; Dann, 1998; Foley & Lennon, 1996; Johnston, 2012; Lisle, 2007; Podoshen, 2018); Podoshen, Venkatesh, Wallin, Andrzejewski, & Jin, 2015; Seaton, 1996, 2009; Sharpley, 2005; Sharpley & Stone, 2009; Skinner, 2012; Stone, 2006, 2012, Stone, Hartmann, Seaton, Sharpley, & White, 2018; Tarlow, 2005). However, very little has been produced on the felt experience of dark sites. While emotions have received some attention in dark tourism studies (Biran & Buda, 2018; Buda, 2015a; Nawijn & Biran, 2018; Nawijn, Isaac, van Liempt, & Gridnevskiy, 2016; Picard & Robinson, 2012; Tucker, 2009, 2016; Waterton & Watson, 2014), ‘to date only one researcher has explicitly focused on the affective dimensions of dark tourism in the context of travel to dangerous places (Buda, 2015a, 2015b; Buda, d’Hauteserre, & Johnston, 2014)’ (Light, 2017, p. 288). Our article builds upon previous contributions in dark tourism (eg Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005; Biran & Hyde, 2013; Buda, 2015a; Buda et al., 2014; Carrigan, 2014; Light, 2017; Stone, 2012, 2013; Stone et al., 2018). Such previous work confronts the predominance of descriptive and case study approaches, providing a prompt to our examination of dark tourism scholarship thus far, and opening the way for a more in-depth analysis of the nexus between dark tourism and affect.

Affect is defined as an other-than-conscious potentiality that can be brought on the surface (see Massumi, 2002; Shouse, 2005; Thrift, 2004, 2008), an intensity that when spiked, can become perceivable as emotion (Ngai, 2005). Affect bleeds into dark places in unpredictable forms and with unexpected intensities, and tourists’ affective responses to death can elicit moments of such intensity in the interaction with space, that it has the potential to become perceivable. The charge and potential of dark places can have a strong impact on visitors and how they relate and interact with space. We adopt an interdisciplinary approach that binds encounters *in* and *with* dark tourism places to socio-cultural studies of affect. We integrate and highlight affect’s presence in dark tourism using a geographical frame borrowing from the work of Pile (2010), Anderson (2006, 2009, 2014), Davidson, Bondi, and Smith (2005), and Massumi (2002).

The article starts by reviewing the main trends in dark tourism studies. We first consider the different terminology and taxonomies used to define and classify dark tourism and acknowledge in all these divisions an underlying current of affects. Secondly, we overview the main features of affect as well as some of the limitations found when affect is applied to empirical cases, such as dark tourism sites. We then illustrate how affect has been directly or indirectly acknowledged so far in dark tourism studies, and discuss some of the approaches that can help understand the ways in which affects shape the tourist encounter in dark places. In the conclusions of the article, we suggest two possibilities for future research: one that could follow the work present in geography on affective atmospheres which recomposes the schism between affect and emotion (Anderson, 2014; McCormack, 2008); and the second that could investigate the idea of the literary sublime as a historical link between dark places and emotions, as ‘the sublime’ connects feelings of terror and fascination to space and place (see Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009).

Framing dark tourism studies

What is dark tourism? Definitions, typologies, and debates

The term ‘*dark tourism*’ has been coined by Foley and Lennon (1996). It is defined as a ‘product of the circumstances of the late modern world’ (Lennon & Foley, 2000, p. 3), an intimation of postmodernity, where death becomes neutralized, mediated and rendered less threatening (Durkin, 2003, p. 47), thus commodifiable for consumption. In the past twenty years dark tourism has gained academic attention and considerable literature has been published. The main trends in dark tourism cover:

definitions and typologies; ethical debates; political roles of such places; motivations, behaviours and visitors' experiences; management and marketing; and inquiries on methods (Light, 2017, p. 277). Reviews of dark tourism (see Ashworth & Isaac, 2015; Hartmann, 2014; Light, 2017; Sharpley & Stone, 2009; Stone et al., 2018) catalogue a numerous labels given to this tourism niche in an 'almost infinite number of overlapping taxonomies' (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015, p. 318), and overview in detail the main trends and evolutions of the concept (Light, 2017).

Amongst the many labels is *thanatourism* (Seaton, 1996), defined as 'travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death' (Seaton, 1996, p. 236). It emphasizes death and its (historical and current) representations as focal point of the touristic experience. Both dark tourism and thanatourism are used in academia, yet there seems to be a preference for the term dark tourism not only from researchers but also from wider audiences (see Buda, 2015a; Dunkley, Morgan, & Westwood, 2011).

Alongside dark tourism research on supply and demand approaches, case studies, tourists' motivations and trends (see Light, 2017, for a comprehensive overview), researchers currently turn their attention to future possibilities for dark tourism, such as 'terror parks' (Wright, 2018), as well as to psychological and psychoanalytical approaches to tourists' experiences in dark places (Biran & Buda, 2018; Buda, 2015b; Korstanje & Ivanov, 2012; Morten, Stone, & Jarratt, 2018). A considerable body of work, in particular, explores post-disaster tourism places, recognizing the emotional, subjective and specific value of these sites (Amujo & Otubanjo, 2012; Chew & Jahari, 2014; Mair, Ritchie, & Walters, 2016; Martini & Buda, 2018; Tucker, Shelton, & Bae, 2017; Wright & Sharpley, 2018).

Motivations to visit dark places have been listed and examined from multiple perspectives and via several approaches: supplier motivations factors (Stone, 2006), socio-cultural perspectives (Gillen, 2018; Stone & Sharpley, 2008), correlations between fatal attractions and motivation (Seaton, 1999), and analysis of motivational elements in potential tourists (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005; Chang, 2017; Isaac & Çakmak, 2014; Isaac, Nawijn, van Liempt, & Gridnevskiy, 2017; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Weaver et al., 2018). In addition to this, researchers focused on processes of dark places rebranding and repurposing (Bird, Westcott, & Thiesen, 2018; Skinner, 2018; Wassler & Schuckert, 2017), termed by some academics 'phoenix tourism' (Causevic, 2008; Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Miller, Gonzalez, & Hutter, 2017).

It is contended that dark tourism continues to be 'eclectic and theoretically fragile and, consequently, understanding of the phenomenon of dark tourism remains limited (Buda, 2015a; Carrigan, 2014). More recently (see edited collection by Stone et al., 2018), an impressive array of work on these dark tourism trends has been published, acknowledging its various and not always cohesive nature. Dark tourism is considered a niche which engages with the idea of death, and fosters encounters with remembrance of fatality and mortality (Seaton, 2018). However, the breadth of this definition allows for dark tourism studies to collapse sites that have extremely different features into the same cauldron and fuzzy typologies (Sather-Wagstaff, 2011, p. 71; Wright & Sharpley, 2018), and categorizes collectively tourists' experiences at theme parks alongside those of visits to genocide camps (Biran & Hyde, 2013, p. 192). Ultimately, the strength of dark tourism consists, as Stone affirms, in its capacity to 'bring together interdisciplinary research from across the globe, whereby we can shine light on the contemporary commodification of death and disaster sites' (Baillargeon, 2016, p. 3, para. 9).

The 'darkness' in dark tourism

The locution 'dark tourism' has undergone critical scrutiny, as detractors claim that it entails negative cultural connotations (Dunnett, 2014; Edensor, 2013), and prefer definitions perceived as more neutral, such as thanatourism. Regardless of the word used to describe visits to places related to death, negativity may be implied because of wider morality and mortality subtexts (Stone, 2006). Siding with either term, we contend following Buda (2015a), only constructs binary oppositions that should be prevented. Dark places are discursive formations that can influence or be influenced by perceptions, imageries and bodily practices, which may bring with itself a connotation of ghastly,

negative and destructive (Sather-Wagstaff, 2011, p. 72), but also of the new or exciting (Edensor, 2013). Dark recalls diabolism, deviancy, monstrosity, death and chaos (Koslofsky, 2011). Nonetheless the imageries associated with darkness, night, and obscurity, have been portrayed also through positive qualities: it is the time of experimentation, excitement, and spectacle (Edensor, 2013, p. 2).

Moreover, not only does 'dark' not always equate with negative, but dark places cannot be considered solely as vehicles of reflection on death, as it diminishes the importance of the spatial characteristics and agency of the tourist (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009). A recent study analysing children's responses at the Guba Genocide Memorial Complex, in Azerbaijan, reports that children are receptive towards the educational purpose of such visits. While most children felt sorrow, some of them enjoyed the experience and found it fascinating (Israfilova & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018, p. 8). While tourists are in most cases motivated by a need for an educational experience, some 'have difficulties in "properly" expressing pain or sorrow about disasters' (Pezzullo, 2009; Yankovska & Hannam, 2014, p. 937). Indeed, in interviews with tour guides in the Chernobyl exclusion zone, researchers concluded that some tourists' emotional response are that of excitement or indifference, rather than sorrow (Yankovska & Hannam, 2014). Studies concerning visitors' motivations at concentration camps in the Netherlands also reports that curiosity, the need to see with their own eyes and to see a place 'different' from the usual tourism sites appear as strong motivators alongside expected reactions of pain, sorrow and empathy (Isaac & Çakmak, 2014; Isaac et al., 2017; Nawijn et al., 2016).

Dark tourism experiences arise through explicitly sought after encounters, whereby tourists are receptive to the networks of affects arose by the connections with death and its representations. Death is part of the story of such sites, but not always the main overt, and explicitly acknowledged motivation for the visit. To assume so, would be to exclude the demonstrations of national identity, educational experience, thrill, joy, fear, hope, nostalgia and all the embodied experiences and feelings central to these encounters. While, for example, the connection to a history of slavery and violence in the United States of America would imply dark tourism, tourism staff and operators orient their narratives towards 'a set of historical myths that marginalize and romanticize slave life in the antebellum South' (Bright, Alderman, & Butler, 2016, p. 6).

Thanatourism itself has been described since its inceptions as not involving a definite motivation, but existing 'across a continuum of intensities' (Seaton, 1996, p. 240), which resonates closely with the idea of affect. Correspondingly, motives like *schadenfreude*, a secret pleasure in witnessing the misfortunes of others (Buda & McIntosh, 2013; Seaton & Lennon, 2004), or *catharsis*, where tourists find in the site understanding and meaning for their life (Causevic & Lynch, 2011), indirectly acknowledge the affective charge of these places. What is notable is that most definitions of dark places, their degree of darkness, the motivations provided for the visit, often relate to the felt aspects of the encounter. In what follows we turn to socio-cultural and spatial theories of affects. We present theoretical debates on affect to unravel a deeper level that re-frames and gives new significance to debates in dark tourism and the dark tourism experience itself.

Framing affect

Debating affect

Theories of affect has been sidelined in most works on tourism, in general, and dark tourism, in particular, while the body and senses received increasing attention (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009; Buda, 2015a; Buda et al., 2014; Edensor, 2000, 2001; Franklin & Crang, 2001; Veijola & Jokinen, 1994), and more recently, emotions (Anderson & Smith, 2001; Davidson, 2003; Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013; Nawijn et al., 2016; White, 2005). Encounters with death and disaster are shaped by intense affective engagements, which are at the heart of dark tourism. However, they are not easily brought into representation, because certain horrific events – and the affective charge with which they are imbued – escape their retelling (Laurier & Philo, 2006, p. 353).

Affect is 'a transpersonal *capacity* which a body has to be affected (through an affection) and to affect (as the result of modifications)' (Anderson, 2006, p. 735), a moment of unformed and unstructured potential realized beyond or outside of consciousness (Shouse, 2005). This potential can be apprehended as an intensity, a mood, that permeates a place or an event, and creates a resonance, an attunement between the feeling bodies (see Anderson, 2006; Ash, 2013). It involves an array of 'modalities, competencies, properties and intensities of different texture, temporality, spatiality and velocities' (Anderson, 2006, p. 734), all characterized by being provisional (McCormack, 2008), blurry (Harrison, 2007), unfinished, unconstrained by borders, and thus not clearly divorceable from emotions, thoughts, and the body (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2016).

Affect is fleeting and transitional (Anderson, 2006; Vannini, 2015), so while it can stay under the surface in many circumstances, when moving between bodies, it can emerge either as spontaneous intensity or carefully constructed situations (see Thrift, 2008). For this reason, it requires careful attention to context and limitations when it is utilized as frame to investigate tourists' experiences in dark places. In fact, two concerns stand out when applying affect to empirical research: its relationship with the often overlapping term emotion and the (im)possibility of effectively distinguishing them; and the methods to adopt for representing volatile and ever-changing affects.

Affect versus emotion

The difficulty of drawing separate borders around affect and emotion has not discouraged academics, who have produced a wide array of work on this complex relationship (for a detailed overview see Pile, 2010 and the responses to his article by Bondi & Davidson, 2011; Curti, Aitken, Bosco, & Goerisch, 2011; Dawney, 2011). Blurry borders do not necessarily constitute a limitation of affect, but of certain Cartesian, positivist approaches that aspire to ground in a fixed form a transitional capacity that 'cannot, by its own account, be shown or understood' (Pile, 2010, p. 9). Many authors believe a division is not possible, nor useful (Ahmed, 2004; Wetherell, 2015). Nonetheless, some authors have attempted to structure the interrelatedness between emotions and affects, qualifying emotions as personal and social projections of an individual feeling (Davidson & Bondi, 2004), conscious, experienced, and expressed (Anderson, 2006). Affect, on the other hand, is unconscious, below, behind and beyond cognition. A possible solution comes from considering affect as differing from emotion in degrees of intensity, rather than essence (Ngai, 2005; Richard & Rudnykyj, 2009), a vibration, rather than a structure (Blackman & Venn, 2010). Following this approach, when an affect is felt so intensely that it becomes consciously perceived, it becomes an emotion. However, whether emotions and affects can be considered autonomous, they are always experienced relationally and in connection to the body and its responses.

'Representing' affect

A second concern shared by researchers relates to methodological efforts, as affect is considered never fully representable. McCormack (2003) contends that expressed emotions cannot be traced back to a reality under the surface that defines what bodies are. The focus should be, instead, on what bodies are doing (McCormack, 2003, p. 494). Recent work in affective geographies lays claim to a more materialist affect, that offers 'something much more – open, embodied, material, relational, political, emergent and immanent – something much more geographical' (Curti et al., 2011). These different viewpoints and challenges are tested when affect moves from theoretical debates to empirical case studies.

A wealth of experimental and inventive methodologies have been borrowed from non- or more-than-representational theories and methods (Anderson & Harrison, 2010), and tested with varying results (see Ash & Anderson, 2015; Lury & Wakeford, 2012; Vannini, 2015). They are composed of 'an umbrella term for diverse work that seeks to better cope with our self-evidently more-than-

human, more-than-textual, multisensual worlds' (Lorimer, 2007, p. 83). Such approaches are not all-encompassing, but use creative and inventive methods to give a sense of the ephemeral present in sensuous events, relations, doings, performances and practices, backgrounds (Vannini, 2015). Non-representational theory 'does not refuse representation per se, only representation as the repetition of the same or representation as a mediation' (Anderson & Harrison, 2010, p. 25), where 'we overlay our perception of the environment with patterns of representation' (Böhme, 2002, p. 6) in intuiting space.

In dark tourism places, affects can be manipulated by tourism stakeholders to enhance certain specific reactions in tourists, which are then expressed in sensations, emotions and bodily actions. If dark tourism could be considered a contemporary mechanism for confronting death, allowing consumers to reflect on death, mortality, and one's own identity (Stone, 2012, 2013), it is essential to understand the different ways in which affects in dark places allow these confrontations.

Encountering affects in dark places

Being affected by mediatized dark events

Nowadays, 'our first impressions of place are as likely to come from audio-visual representations as those of real life' (Sydney-Smith, 2006, p. 79). The framing and circulation of images and imagery within the media in a globalized world does not spare places of war, ongoing socio-political conflict, death, and disaster (Buda, 2015a; Lisle, 2007; Tzanelli, 2013). These forms produce new 'dark' spaces for affect, built around excesses of sensation and intensity and the connection to death and dark tourism (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2009). Media play a big part in making death and disaster visible and consumable by an audience that is looking for a way to 'confront the remainder, or to be confronted with that which is in excess of signification' (Doane, 2006, p. 213). The presence of death events in the media creates a flow in which people become familiar with these places (Buda & McIntosh, 2013), and can produce a numbing effect on the spectator (Pile, 2011, p. 302). News about death and disaster are produced and shared 'in a way that tethers global engagement and attention directly to the flow of affect' (McCosker, 2013, p. 382).

Mobility, digitalization and social media make consumption of death and disaster events immediately accessible, and unfiltered. Breaking news, newspapers and other media outlets, when faced with a new disaster, convey the horror and pain of those who suffer (Pantti & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007, p. 10), in a way that is 'inscribed with emotion and appeals to a sense of imagined community in response to the tragedy and trauma of the disaster' (Cottle, 2008, p. 51). Without affect, audiences do not connect with disasters, which have a relatively short cycle (Massumi, 2011), and count on the initial shock to secure a powerful global response (McCosker, 2013). All the powerful, empathetic stories of casualties and survivors to horrible disasters elicit affective responses that relate to the awareness of human vulnerability and death that resonates intimately and viscerally with the audience (McCosker, 2013). In fact, some people can decide to 'see with their own eyes' what they gazed at as audio-visual audience, and once the disaster or tragic event has passed, visit the remembrance site as a tourist.

Visiting dark places

Dark tourism comes in a wide array of forms, all connected by an engagement with death and its representations. Tourists in dark places make sense of their travels through the overlapping, fluid, ever-changing relations of their bodies, emotions, affects, thoughts, social, cultural and spatial interactions. Dark places are often unruly networks in which identity is performed and contested (Buda et al., 2014). They provoke complex reactions in people visiting them (Cooke, 2012, p. 55), because such travels can be undertaken for reasons that might not follow dark motivations (Sather-Wagstaff, 2011). Dark tourism can be considered a quest to experience a disaster from a safe

place, or to experience *thanatopsis* in a familiar setting whose iconography is culturally shared and already experienced through movies, news and other media (see Pile, 2011; Romanillos, 2008).

When visiting dark places tourists can experience a sense of danger and fear, often, mixed with excitement (Buda, 2015b; Yankowska & Hannam, 2014). Indeed, fear and danger can make people feel alive, and as tourists engage with death and fear from a safe space, they can affectively perceive the grandiosity and magnificence of what happened, which can manifest in an emotion such as excitement, or catharsis (see also Causevic & Lynch, 2011). These sites whereby tourists can express their desire to understand tragic, or death-related events of the past (Yan et al., 2016), can be permanent or transitory, a type of experiential space, where the '*death experience*' happens in 'real time' (Podoshen et al., 2015).

Disaster restructures the relational positions of many places in commercial and social networks (Gibson, 2008), whereby the dark tourism phenomenon often produces new economic ventures and opportunities to rebrand places following events of from great loss and turmoil (Amujo & Otubanjo, 2012; Medway, & Warnaby, 2008). Others remark the political and social role of visits to such sites, as a means to raise awareness, international sympathy and support for the recovery process (Evans, 2010; Miller, 2007; Muskat, Nakanishi, & Blackman, 2015). In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when the situation stabilized, both private enterprises and the municipality of New Orleans itself capitalized on the event, counting on 'tourist's desire for the dramatic' (Gotham, 2007, p. 828). On their part, tourists can reject or challenge what they see and how dark sites are presented to them (Franklin, 2003), or they can desire a more in-depth understanding (Muzaini, Teo, & Yeoh, 2007). Moreover, they can build their own stories and meanings (Strange & Kempa, 2003), often in relation to their own identity, expectations and personal experiences.

Dark tourism sites have the potential to generate a wide range of simultaneous reactions and feelings (Nawijn et al., 2016): from anger (Israfilova & Khoo-Lattimore, 2018), to disgust (Podoshen et al., 2015), shock and fear (Buda, 2015a; 2015b), to responses such as hope (Koleth, 2014) and pride (Cheal, & Griffin, 2013). It can also be an opportunity to affectively engage with both personal and social catharsis. Causevic and Lynch (2011, p.794) observe that 'through the talk about the war, tour guides go through their personal catharsis', and can produce social catharsis in the interactions with tourists and places. To understand dark tourism affective experiences of visitors, the psychoanalytical notions of voyeurism has been adopted (Buda & McIntosh, 2013), as well as the concepts of the death drive (Buda, 2015b) and desire (Buda & Shim, 2015). They highlight the need to conceptualize dark tourism in terms of the individual's subjective and affective experiences, rather than identifiable attractions, in order to capture the complexities around the dark tourism phenomenon.

The politics of affect in dark tourism places

Affect can be conceptualized as a politically crucial subject for understanding socio-spatial processes (Ansaloni & Tedeschi, 2016). Space is affectively saturated and tourists in dark places make sense of difficult and often contested places through the fluid, relations amongst their bodies, emotions, affects, thoughts, social, cultural, and spatial interactions. Dark tourism mirrors some issues already discussed in heritage tourism, such as authenticity, ethics and commodifying death for tourism purposes (Light, 2017). Affects can be manipulated and assembled at other than conscious levels, and also depend on agency, expectations, habits and objectives (Barnett, 2008), as well as social ties (Duff, 2010). It can thus be engineered to serve specific political purposes and messages. Political decision is, in itself, aimed at generating intensities (Thrift, 2004, p. 58), and creates flows of affect that exceed simple characterization as expression of active management or passive constitution (Wetherell, 2015).

In dark tourism landscapes, this means that narratives of death and tragedies co-exist or overwrite pre-existing narratives (Ness, 2005), to cater to tourists who are looking for something, whether it is excitement, hope, fear, catharsis, empathy, or any other affect. In this regard, tourism produces a *dis-empplacement* that transforms places and intentionalities (Ness, 2005), as the presence of tourists can

shape and alter the topography, the meaning, patterns of belonging and inclusion and exclusion from national narratives (Wetherell, 2015). Causevic and Lynch (2011) call it *phoenix tourism*, where the place of conflict is re-imagined and developed into a new place. These practices are imbued in affect, and can be a vehicle for the re/branding of destinations (Wu, Funck, & Hayashi, 2014), or for nation-building strategies (Sharpley & Stone, 2009; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996).

Conclusions: future routes for affective dark tourism

In this conceptual paper we framed dark tourism studies within theories of affect so as to better understand the affective layer of dark tourism, and how tourists' affects are negotiated by their relationship with death and its representations; how they are politically engineered by tourism workers and local stakeholders through processes of place-making; and the ways dark sites are framed by news and information outlets to which the tourist has been exposed, and dependent on the tourist's identity, and expectations. To further studies on the nexus between dark tourism and affect, we propose two routes that have the potential for future research: (i) geographical approaches to the concept of atmosphere, and (ii) the literary sublime.

Atmosphere is 'a class of experience' that occurs 'before and alongside the formation of subjectivity, across human and nonhuman materialities' (Anderson, 2009, p. 78, emphasis in the original). Its borders are 'amorphous and elusive' (Bondi & Davidson, 2011, p. 595), and move between emotions and affects, presence and absence, singularity and generality (Anderson, 2009). Atmosphere is autopoietic (Duff, 2010) and geopoietic (Adey, 2015), as it generates place and it is generated by place through the interaction of bodies and affects. Affect and atmospheres are not synonyms, as to exist an atmosphere needs to be in contact with the body perceiving it (Edensor & Sumartojo, 2015) and it is always mixed with emotions, thoughts, bodily forces. It is a more flexible concept than affect, because it implies a space imbued with social, ethical, political charges that can be apprehended (Simondon, 2005). Successful places of dark tourism are deliberately built so that material remains, narratives, and reproductions of tragic events are assembled in a coherent, powerful way that creates an atmospheres in which affects are perceivable. Atmospheres, as elusive, affective networks, are neither silent nor neutral (Adey, 2015). They can be grasped as metaphoric or poetic, but they also contain political forces of accountability, discipline and containment (Feigenbaum & Kann-gieser, 2015). Bodies can be manipulated and influenced in politically specific ways and for political purposes by atmospheres (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2016).

In dark tourism places, stakeholders involved in the development of a site are required to frame its story and meaning for tourism purposes. They do so by modifying, engineering, and manipulating places to develop a coherent narrative that re-orientates and artificially organizes the event of death or disaster to be fruible to tourists. It is a process that in some ways shows similarities to heritage-making endeavours (Light, 2017). Both negotiate political and ethical intensities inscribed in many tourism ventures and 'of the social, historical, cultural and political contexts in which atmospheres emerge and dissipate, and the attunement of some to become absorbed within them' (Edensor & Sumartojo, 2015, p. 252). Such attunements are not mute, but grounded in corporeal expressions that act in social context and accounts for ethical, political, cultural, performative aspects of the interactions between people and place (Anderson, 2014; McCormack, 2010). They manifest in an alteration in a body's capacity to act referred to as atmosphere (McCormack, 2008), that is channelled through social and culturally specific tropes.

Another thread to a deeper understanding of affects in dark tourism places comes from analyses of the literary sublime. The aesthetic of the sublime was developed for the first time in the first century BC by an unknown author in the treatise *On the Sublime*. It is a compendium of literary examples, with the purpose of defining the 'sublime' as a rhetorical style aimed at touching the audience by enhancing their feelings through writing. The term was recuperated during the Pre-Romantic and Romantic period. Linking back to thanatourism, Seaton (1996) follows De Quincey's 1827 essay on thanatopsis, *On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts*, describing how during the Romantic

period a taste for death and macabre started to develop. It was also influenced by gothic literature, as well as what Mario Praz (1930) calls *Black Romanticism*, a preoccupation with flesh, death and the devil, where pleasure is mixed with pain and horror. These elements denote an attitude to death that still lingers today.

The sublime can be, in many ways, connected to dark tourism research, as they both share a focus on the fascination people have with dark and decaying places. The potential of the concept of the sublime has been recognized by some authors, but only briefly and in passing (Seaton, 1996; Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009; Goatcher & Brunsden, 2011), to link touring and tourism experiences with the necessity to reflect upon death. Skinner, 2018 remarks on the link between the sublime, tourism and natural catastrophe. The author examines written accounts of tourists who visited Lisbon to see the destruction caused by the 1755 great earthquake, as well as contemporary destinations involving volcanoes eruptions: Santorini and Monserrat (Skinner, 2018). The sublime as a mode of subjective experience of dark places contains deep links with the felt world, especially with the other-than-conscious, more-than-human, and hardly representable affective facets of experience. The sublime combines fear of the infinite and incomprehensible with a transcendence of that fear, and overwhelms our day-to-day senses (Goatcher & Brunsden, 2011). It is also associated with Romantic literature and painting (see Burke, 1757; or the paintings by William Turner), and nineteenth-century North American landscape. It refers to 'an inexpressible and emotionally uplifting mood of awe, wonder and the all-powerful' (Sage, 2008, p. 28). Focusing on dark and exceptional moments is therefore a way to explore the 'affective preconditions of social life' (Gow, 2000), and how the sense of self that is constituted intersubjectively – through memories and emotionally laden images others have of oneself – is also constantly threatened (Allard, 2013).

Notes

1. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL>
2. <http://auschwitz.org/en/visiting/attendance/>
3. <https://2017.911memorial.org/>
4. <https://theglobepost.com/2018/04/25/chernobyl-tourism/>

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